

A CASE
FOR
MULSHI PETA SATYAGRAHA.



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This pamphlet is being published with a view to enlighten the public on the matter of Mulshi Peta Satyagraha. The reader is requested to go through this with a sympathetic heart and try to grasp the spirit of Mavalas, disregarding any inaccuracies in statistics which were unavoidable owing to the hasty way in which the booklet had to be published.

When one part of humanity is governed by another part of humanity, whose interests are altogether different from those who are governed, it is but natural that *injustice should be the rule of the day*. During the latter half of the nineteenth century we Indians tried to get our wrongs righted by moderate means, such as sending deputations to the authorities, protesting in mild language in public meetings and so forth. There was another section amongst us who protested against injustice in vehement language and tried to create a strong public opinion which was expected to impress the Bureaucracy which was looked upon as the saviour of the masses. But alas! all these attempts have proved futile. Under these circumstances the leaders of various political opinions were trying to find out some new way to remedy the wrongs and to attain the goal; but it was reserved for the Mavalas of Mulshi Peta to lead their leaders in this matter and bring home to them that when all other means are failing, there still remains one very important remedy viz. "personal suffering."

popularly known as Satyagraha. The remedy of personal suffering appeals not to an alien Government but to their fellow workers to help to redress their wrongs, because their interests are not antagonistic. Now the reader will understand that he is not helpless if he be willing to do justice to his fellow bretheren. Simply he is to share the suffering of the Satyagrahis. The Almighty will lead both the sufferer and the helping hand to the cherished object.

POONA CITY, }
28th July 1921. }

V. D. PHATAK.

A CASE FOR MULSHI PETA SATYAGRAHA.

The Mulshi Mavlas worship the land of their birth. In this land they have their ancestral estates, their homes, their sacred temples. In this land they enjoy many advantages as their birth rights. All this beloved and sacred property in estate and rights and duties, the Mavlas desire to save from ruin and disaster. They accordingly are employing every just and peaceful means to combat the Peril of the Mulshi Dam. These people did not put their hand to Satyagraha, so long as they had any hope of getting their object by other means. It was only when these other means were tried and found wanting that Satyagraha, the last weapon of the persevering, was taken in hand.

Mulshi Peta.

This tract lies to the west of the City of Poona at a distance of about 25 miles. It forms part of the Poona District. It is situated at the foot of the Sahya range at a height of 1900 feet above sea-level. Fifty-four villages comprising a population of about 10000 souls go to form the Mulshi Peta. 40000 acres on the average come under the plough from year to year. Not a small part of this arable land stands first in fertility in the whole of India. The rainfall in this tract is generally very regular and plentiful, some portions receiving from 200 to 250 inches of rain every year. Nila and Mula rivers have their sources in this Peta, their confluence being situated near the Mulshi village.

The main industry of the people in this tract is agriculture. Rice is the staple produce. Mulshi Peta

gives us the best *ambe mohor* rice 15000 *khandis* is the average annual output of rice in this Peta. Thus the peta produces rice far in excess of the wants of its inhabitants and hence is able to send out hundreds of *khandis* for the use of outsiders. The hills of the peta supply the Mavalas with abundance of fuel, as the plains and hill sides offer them abundance of food. The fuel is to be had here for the gathering and so is grass with which the ranges of Sabya are clothed from top to toe. *Laks* of rupees are earned by the Mavlas in grass trade, Poona, Kirkee and other neighbouring stations being the chief buyers.

The Mavlas are a people simple in their habits and honest in their dealings, their hearts being generally speaking pure and unsophisticated. The Civilisation of the West—the disease which has gone deep into many of us—has not made victims of the Mavlas so far. Hence the visitor who makes a round of Mulshi feels himself carried back to the scenes of a hundred or two hundred years ago. The Mavlas' honesty of dealing and simplicity of habit, by themselves a most valuable possession, are rendered doubly so by a singular freedom from vice which characterises the Mavlas. Not a single liquor shop disfigures the Peta. The Mavlas have thus been able to live happily, though their individual circumstances are not those of easy affluence. Smoking and tobacco-chewing are not uncommon. But beyond this the simple Mavlas do not care to step in the cultivation of the pleasure faculty. Even tea, the dear drink of the town workers, poor coolies and all, finds no place in the vast majority of Mavli homes.

Free from vice the Mavlas are naturally lovers of the peaceful life. Plain of living, their needs are naturally few and they are contented with a small moiety

of the goods of life. Avalas is the only police station in the whole peta, which bears a sufficient witness to the peace loving and contented nature of the people. The life of the thief, the robber, the dacoit and the like is foreign to the Mavli blood. To labour in the field and to live in contentment on the product of this labour—this is the Mavla's way of living and his philosophy of life. Agriculture is his ancestral and inherited occupation. His family and forefathers have been in it for hundreds of years. He loves it and lives it, and has no love for any other way of living. If the ancient Mavla is deprived of his ancient way of living, the *Tokri*, the coolies *Tokri*, is all that remains to him as the possible source of his tearful bread!

Maharashtra cannot bear this thought. Maharashtra dearly loves its Mavlas of Mulshi, not only because they are by their nature and nurture a loveable people, but also because its bright history and all its dear glory of the dear and not so remote past has for its home the land of the Mavlas. The Mavlas are the pillars of the glorious Maratha History. The very name of the Mavlas and of Sahyadri causes every Maharashtra mind to surge with unnumbered images of varied look and colour. The instant Sahyadri is named, up flashes before his mind's eye the history of the seventeenth century of Maharashtra; the Great Shri Shivaji, Baji Prabhu, Prataprao Gujar and other devotees of the motherland in their free and unchecked movements pass before him in a grand mental procession.

He who is not of us, he who is a foreigner, might see in the high sky-licking heads of the Sahya range only a lifeless mass of earth and stone. But to us Maharashtriyans, they are nothing less than *Sanji-*

ranees, revivifying the lifeless masses of this the twentieth century. To the foreigner the Mavlas living on the tops and slopes of the Sahya hills, the unlettered and uncivilised rustics, might appear to be men of no earthly use. To the Maharashtriyans, however, these same rustics are the indomitable soldiers of the Swarajya war. Such noble hopes do we of Maharashtra build on the Mavlas of the sacred Sahya hills, and who that knows our history will dare to call them vain? These men of the hills under the leadership of Shri Shivaji and his successors laboured infinitely to save their *Dharma* and their *Desha*. To his end they caused rivers of blood to flow. To this end they made sacrifices unparalleled in the history of any nation. Shall the twentieth century descendants of those brave and noble souls act less nobly and less bravely? Maharashtra fondly and confidently hopes that the Mavlas of to-day will in the new circumstances exhibit the same noble qualities in the fight for Swarajya which their forefathers showed in the old times. What man of heart who loves to serve the mother can be so simple as to call Maharashtra mad and sentiment-possessed because it fastens itself to such high hopes?

Sahyadri's summits and slopes are holy ground. The dust of the holy feet of Shree Samartha, Tukarama, Shri Shivaji, Tanaji and other saints and servants of *Swatantrya* has been shed on these summits and slopes. In the seventieth century it was this sacred land and its noble people that saved Maharashtra, in its life as well as reputation. This same land and this same people are now threatened with utter deluge and disaster. Shall not Maharashtra rush forward with one undivided mind to help them in their calamity? It will be a wonder—and a shame—if it won't.

The blessings of God and the favours of Nature which have fallen to the share of the Mavlas are now, it would seem; becoming their curse and their ruin. This is the twentieth century, the century of cruel strife, the struggle for life. That a few brethren should, in this era of strife, roll happily in the lap of Mother Nature becomes veritable eye sore to some others. The Tatas, how could they stand the sight of the Mavlas living their happy life in the lap of Mother Nature? The Tatas saw and they made up their mind. They saw with their evil eye the Mavla's happy region with its streams and rivers and its plentiful rainfall and they made up their mind to put it all under contribution and to ring profits out of it.

The Tatas prepared a scheme. They would dam all the water available and make electricity. The Tatas got the Government to look at it in the proper spirit! And the Government supported the Tatas and sanctioned their scheme!

The dam of the scheme stops Nila and Mula at their confluence near Mulshi. It is to be a wall 150' in breadth and 250' high. It will be half a mile in length. The electrical Power House will be at Bhivandi, Taluka Mangaon, District Kolaba. To this House the water of the Mulshi dam-lake will be carried along canals and large *nals* across and over the Sahya hills. The electricity goes to Bombay, there to move the spindles and the looms and sundry machines in the mills and factories and also to move the railway trains. Such is the Tata scheme.

The Scheme wants land. The Scheme puts its finger on the Mulshi Peta, and the Talukas of Haveli Mangaon, Rohe, Pen, Panwel, Sashti. Land is wanted, in all these tracts. The wanted land is spread with

houses and fields and other possessions of the poor and the well-to-do. The possessors, the owners are a great bother. To get these men privately to put all their possessions into the hands of the Company for a consideration, for a little rustling or gingling money—this would be unprofitable and exhausting labour. There is the Land Acquisition Act. A dash of the quill or say of the Swan, and any amount of land is at the feet of the government for making over to any Company that comes under the Act. The rich capitalist is a pet of the government, the bureaucracy. He has simply to speak out his pleasure, the bureaucracy is ever ready to indulge him. For the wanted land, therefore the Tatas sought the aid of the Act and they got it readily. The bureaucracy agreed for a reasonable consideration that the Tata scheme comes under the Act, that the Tata Scheme was a public purpose and having thus agreed, without more ado sent the wonderful Act to the aid of the Tatas, and felt verily pleased at its own beneficence.

If the beneficent Act is faithfully applied and the Scheme is carried through, 54 villages comprising from 10 to 12 thousand souls will be effaced from the Mulshi Peta. Ten to twelve thousand Malvas will be made homeless and beggars in the street.

We shall let the poor Mavlas alone for the present and sit at the feet of the Tatas. The Scheme is a national boon, the Tatas say. Let us listen to the Tatas while they expatiate upon the national services which their scheme is going to render and upon other cognate matters.

(1) The Scheme will give us 1,50,000 H. P. Units of electric energy, which means a saving in coal to the extent of 5,25,000 tons equal to a saving of 183 lakhs of rupees at the present prices.

(2) The above saving in coal will bring in Rs. 1,37,50,000 every year as profits to the Bombay Mill-owners.

(3) The said quantity of coal requires 26,250 wagons to carry it. This number of wagons will be available for other work when the said quantity is no longer required.

(4) After utilisation for electricity generation the water will be applied to the irrigation of land.

(5) If the whole electric power goes to the Cotton Mills 3,00,000 labourers will have employment and the daily turnout of cloth will be 1,00,000 yards.

(6) The Electricity will be applied to the railway traffic. More trains will run between Bori Bunder and Kalyan as also between Colaba and Virar. Electric Trains will run between Bombay and Poona as also between Bombay and Igatpuri and this service will bring prosperity to the people.

(7) Only 9 p. c. of the Tata Company's capital is foreign. The Tatas when they floated this Company reserved 60 p. c. of the capital for themselves, putting out for subscription only 40 p. c. Only a small portion of the reserved 60 p. c. is subscribed personally by the Tata people.

(8) Only 16 sq. miles of land or thereabouts will be actually submerged while the area carrying water to the lake will be 100 sq. miles.

(9) Only 9000 and not 15000 Mavlas will have to move out owing to the scheme.

(10) The dam will take from 6 to 7 years for completion. The Mavlas of the Mulshi Peta can during this period make money as labourers on the dam.

(11) The Company is building a railway for the dam and this railway will do infinite good to the public.

(12) The Mavlas will by this scheme develop the consciousness that they are making a sacrifice for their country, that they are moving out to become labourers in order that their country may go forward in prosperity and well being.

(13) 75 p. c. of the Mavlas' lands are mortgaged to *Savkars*. *Savkars*. or *baniyas*—and the Mavlas are not therefore the real losers by the scheme.

(14) Of 40000 acres only 10000 will be actually submerged.

Let us now see if these fourteen points strongly urged by the Tatas in support of their inhuman scheme stand the test of reason and truth. We may proceed to consider them one by one:—

(1) The greatest benefit claimed as a consequence of the Mulshi dam is the yearly saving of 5,25,000 Tons of coal. This coal argument would, however, carry little weight with those who are really acquainted with the facts about the production and consumption of coal. The figure 5,25,000 looks big only so long as it stands alone. In comparison to the figure which represents the total coal production in this country, it is sure to dwindle down into an insignificant nonentity. And if that be so, no sane man would consent to ruin the farmers for securing this petty saving in coal. The Bombay Mills would surely not come to a dead standstill if electricity was not supplied to them. Only five per cent of the total coal is spent on the mills. At present Indian mines give out 2,25,00,000 tons of coal every year; and if sufficient capital and labour is available the figure

may rise upto 3,00,00,000 without much difficulty. Why should not then the Tata Company utilise its capital of seven crores in getting more coal out of the mines, instead of maturing and executing a scheme which would make thousands of Mavlas homeless and helpless, and reduce them to the state of miserable slaves of the capitalists? The Tatas seem to have frightened themselves with the distant prospect of the time when all the mines will have been exhausted of their natural wealth. Let them live, however, in the 'living present.' If they spend their money in taking a greater quantity of coal from out of the mines, it would be more reasonable, more useful, and welcome to the poor farmers. The English mines yield ten times what is got out of Indian mines, and they are being worked for the last so many years. Yet neither the Government nor the capitalists in England have ever taken it into their head to construct dams and ruin their poorer fellow-countrymen. Why should the Indian farmers allow themselves to be the victims of the impatient schemes of the capitalists and indirectly of Government? If proper economy is insured in the consumption of coal in the mills six lacs tons of coal could surely be saved with ease. The saving of six lacs of tons does not demand the wanton sacrifice of the whole of the Mulshi population. Besides, it must not be forgotten that since all the spinning and weaving mills are not located in Bombay, the electric supply to the Bombay mills can save, not six, but at the most "three" lacs of tons. Is it not monstrous to sacrifice the vital interests of ten thousand Mavlas for the purpose of saving three lacs tons of coal?

(2) Secondly the Tatas argue that their Mulshi dam will yield an yearly profit of 1,37,500,000 to the Bombay Mill-owners. But it is inhuman to regard the interest of a few capitalists as 'public interest.' A hand-

ful of Mill-owners certainly do not constitute the 'public.' The project of levelling to the ground the thousands of humble homesteads of the poor Mavlas, in order to fatten the purse of a few rich folks, only reveals the motive that lies behind the Mulshi dam. It is the crore and a half of jingling rupees that must be appealing to the apologists of the Tata scheme more than the six lacs tons of coal. It is difficult to believe that the millionaires of Bombay have grown so public-spirited as to insist upon the saving of six lacs tons of coal. If it be said that perhaps the Bombay capitalists will spend their profits arising out of the Tata scheme in the interests of the poorer classes, we must clearly express our unwillingness to believe in such a possibility. When for instance, at the informal meeting held at the Gaekwar Wada, Mr. N. C. Kelkar threw out a hint as to the way in which the Tatas may spend their extra profits on public purposes, it was immediately thrown aside by Mr. Bhabha. We need not the services of a prophet to tell us that the extra profits would only go to defray the bills for foreign motors and other articles of luxury, or to engineer another such scheme which will take out bread from the hungry mouths of poor people. Who would blame the Mavlas under such circumstances, if they refuse to sell their lands and go in for Satyagraha if the lands are forced out of their possession ?

Government have recently manufactured one more curious plea which would enable them to misrepresent the Capitalists' profit of one crore and more as a matter of "public interest." It is said that the electric supply to the mills of Bombay will enable the mill-owners to sell cloth at cheaper rate and thus ultimately the poor class will be benefited by the Tata Scheme. Mr. Hudson, Collector of Poona, tried to impress the Mavlas with this argument when they had assembled in a

public meeting. The fallacy in this argument, however, is too obvious. The price of an article in the market is determined, not by the minimum amount of money required to produce it, but rather by the average expenses which it entails. Evidently, then, even if the Bombay mills are run with electric power, the prices of cloth would remain what they are until the mills at Ahmedabad, Sholapur, Nagpur, Cownpore, Madras and other places run on old lines; and extra profits to the Bombay mill-owners will be the only direct result of the Tata Scheme. Can this, with any imaginable sense of propriety, be called a matter of "public benefit"?

(3) The next argument of the Tatas is that their scheme would relieve 26,250 railway waggons of their present pressure, which could then be used for other purposes of traffic and give a healthy impetus to the country's commerce. But no supposition could be more mistaken. It was only during the great war, when ships could not be had for coal traffic, that coal was borne by the Railway waggons. The termination of the war is sure to bring things to the normal condition, which means that Railway waggons would no more be in requisition for the coal traffic. Besides the new Itarsi-Nagpur line which the G.I.P. Railway have under construction runs through the Pench valleys where numerous coal mines are located. When the line is completed the Pench valleys would pour tons of coal into Bombay, and it would no more be necessary to bring coal from Bengal. That will automatically save half the number of waggons at present required to fetch coal from Bengal. Bombay would be nearer the coal mines, and about seven lacs tons of coal could easily be drawn from there and sent over to Bombay, even if it necessitates the building of 25,000 new waggons; and

what is more important is that this whole business can be managed with a capital less than what is being handled for the Mulshi dam, and that there would be no need of ruinings thousands of innocent farmers.

Again, even if we grant that a number of waggons could be spared when the Bombay mills begin to be supplied with Tatas' electricity, they are more likely to be used for carrying the wheat, cotton, bones, hides and other things that are exported to Foreign countries, thus facilitating Indian commerce. It is a thing proved by the experience of years that the Railway Companies always look to the European interests in preference to the Indian. When these considerations are as clear as anything, it is too much to expect that the Mavlas will be prepared to sell their ancestral properties. They are surely not so silly as to commit suicide in the hope of getting a comfortable corner on the moon in the future.

(4) The argument that the water which would be let loose after the generation of electricity will be available for agricultural purposes and will thus indirectly benefit the country, can hardly be believed in. The water that goes out from the huge tanks all round Lonavla has not been so used. And again even if the water from the Mulshi dam is supposed to be lent for agricultural work, it will only add to the treasures of some contractor or Government and the poor farmers who will have to pay for the water will be none the better or happier for it. There cannot be even the faintest hope that the income accruing from the waste water would be distributed amongst the homeless Mavlas of the Mulshi Peta.

(5) The Tata company maintains that when the whole electric power generated at the Mulshi works will be spent on the Bombay mills slowly coming into existence, it will give employment to 3,00,000 of work-

men. But the Company themselves admit that the whole power will not be used by the mills. That means the figure 3,00,000 is unreasonably magnified. Besides if the Company want to make much of the saving of six lacs tons of coal—an argument with which we have sufficiently dealt above—they must grant that the electric supply would be spent on the already existing old mills and would not bring into existence any new mills at all! And if no new mills rear their heads, how can there be an employment of 3,00,000 fresh workmen? In short, the Company cannot simultaneously claim for its Mulshi Scheme, both the advantages viz. the saving of coal and the employment of labour. The company, however, wants to throw dust into the eyes of the public and make them believe the most preposterous things. But that can no more be. And, we may well ask, if the whole electric power is meant to be utilised by the Bombay mills, what becomes of the tall talk of improving the sanitation of Bombay by running the local trains with the help of electricity and thus inducing the people to go out from Bombay to the suburbs? And what become of the fanciful schemes of running the Bombay trams, lighting the lamps and feeding several big factories with the Mulshi electricity? Are these projects to be only castles in the air? Does this not make it evident that in parading out various benevolent features of their Mulshi Scheme the Tata Company have been busy at slight of hand? The net result of the Tata adventure would only be two-fold: (1) It will save six lacs tons of coal; and (2) it will yield one crore and a quarter of extra profit to a few capitalists of Bombay. This is being trumpeted out as “public interest” and it is for this that thousands of Mavlas are going to be driven out from their ancient lands!

(6) Even granting that a part of the Tata Electric power will go to run the G. I. P. and B. B. C. I. local trains and will improve Bombay's Sanitation by thinning out its population, does it not remain to be seen whether the monstrous Mulshi scheme of the Tatas is the only means to that end? If the only object in view be the thinning out of the population of Bombay, it can be achieved by spreading a net-work of good ports round about the city. The desirability and practicability of this has often been brought to the notice of Government. Several people had prepared their schemes in the matter, but they have been disregarded. Besides the Industrial Commission has suggested another remedy against the thickly crowded population of Bombay. The commission found that the main and perhaps the only cause of the dense population is to be found in the fact that the workshops of both the big railway companies are situated in the city, and it proceeded to say, "Nowhere in India does a big city like Bombay accommodate such health-spoiling workshops; and even Bombay must drive out these workshops as soon as possible." Has this recommendation of the Commission been ever seriously considered? Will it not be more fair, reasonable, just and humane to rid Bombay of the intruding workshops rather than brutally asking thousands of innocent peaceful farmers to clear out of their beloved lands? Sir Dorab Tata, who professes to be very anxious about the health of Bombay, was a member of the Industrial Commission. Why should he not have pestered Government or the Railway Companies to remove the workshops from their present sites? Why should there be, on the contrary, a regular campaign started by the Tatas and other big folk to brew a number of hard-hearted and venturous schemes which will inevitably result in draining the country population from the villages to the

cities? It is a wonderful device, to be sure, to drive the country farmers to Bombay in order to reduce the population of the city! And again, the inclination of the Bombay people to go out to the suburb does not depend only on the increased local service of the G. I. P., and the B. B. C. I. railways. There must first be good habitable plots of land in the suburbs to which people could feel attracted, and besides, sufficiently big chawls must be built up to accommodate the exodus from Bombay. All these things will require a huge capital and cannot be achieved in a moment. Have the Tatas provided for these things? But even if they have, let us make it clear that, as things are, the reduction of Bombay's population is an impossibility. For, thousands of people are always on the look out for an opportunity to step into Bombay; and the result has been that in spite of the Herculean efforts to improve the health of the city and make it less crowded, the last ten years have poured crores of residents on it and have made it woefully difficult for a new-comer to get any lodgings. The real remedy against the deteriorating health of a city is not to allow it to be used for factories and mills beyond a certain limit. But the rich capitalists and their ally, the Government, can afford to forget even such simple rules of sanitation with impunity!

(7) The Tatas say that only nine per cent of their capital is foreign. This may perhaps be true at present. But who could guarantee that this will be so for ever? It has been an old experience with us that a company is often pretended to be started with Indian capital and then no sooner does it go into liquidation than the European capitalists buy it and make it entirely their own. It is not then surprising if people are afraid that the Tata company may, perhaps, ultimately develop into a European concern. Even at present the Tatas

are more of a private concern than a public company, for sixty per cent of the shares have been reserved for the Directors and their friends. One is likely to be curious to know who these fortunate 'friends' of the Tatas are; and the Company has not left the curiosity unsatisfied. At the informal meeting held in the Gai-kwad Wada, Mr. Bhabha, speaking on behalf of the Tatas, said that the "Directors and their friends" only meant influential capitalists, brokers, and people in the Directors' circle. This single statement of Mr. Bhabha is quite sufficient to show how the Tatas are not a public but a private company. Surely the few capitalists, brokers and Directors do not constitute the nation. The Tatas themselves admit that seventy per cent of the shares are not open; and it yet remains to be seen if the remaining shares belong to the Tatas themselves or have come from loans, and if from loans, whether the loan has been raised in India or foreign countries. Until all these things are made clear, no one will be ready to identify the company's interest with the public interest.

(8, 9, 14) With reference to the three points it has been alleged by the Tatas that the Satyagrahis have published false figures with the intention of creating public feeling against them. But any impartial observer who would scrutinisingly look into the figures published by the Tatas on the one hand and the Satyagrahis on the other will bear testimony that it is the Tatas who are deluding the people with the help of false statistics. The total area of the 52 villages named is 40,000 square acres, and of this 10,000 square acres will be submerged in water. Evidently 30,000 square acres of land will in future be available to the Mulshi people. Speaking abstractly the proportion of the land to be submerged to the total area may look insignificant.

But a mere mathematical consideration would not be justified in this case. We must look to the nature of the land to be submerged and also to the extent to which the Mavlas depend for their livelihood exactly on that land. The lands at the lower level would be submerged without any exception and it would only be the lands on the higher level that would be saved. Evidently the farm-lands where rice is produced and can be produced will find a watery grave. At the most one fourth of the agricultural land would stand some remote chance of escaping deluge; and here could be produced neither rice nor any other valuable grain but only "Nachani" and similar inferior grain. This kind of land can not be expected to provide a means of livelihood to the farmers for generations together, and hence they will have very soon to leave their homes in search of bread. The land would soon grow into waste land, and when abandoned by their rightful owners they will be used either by adventurous robbers or by Government. In short, to argue that 30,000 acres in the Mulshi Peta are sure to remain unsubmerged is only exposing one's hard-heartedness. The same is the case with the statistics of the Tatas as regards the villages that are threatened by their scheme. It is alleged that not 52 but only 37 villages will be submerged. Even admitting this position, let us consider how the remaining villages would fare after the deluge. Will these villagers feed themselves on stones or wood when all the cultivable plots of land will be under water? Will they not perforce have to migrate to the cities? Even if a few acres of cultivable land are fortunately saved and left available for a village or two the villagers will soon find that, with all means of communication destroyed, with the climate growing worse on account of the tank, the only way to save their dear lives is to run

away from their ancient places. Thus directly or indirectly the Tata Scheme would undoubtedly render 40,000 acres of land useless, level down 52 villages, and send twelve thousand Mavlas away from their hearths and homes.

(10) This argument is but a proof of the disgustingly brutal attitude which the Tatas are prepared to adopt towards their countrymen. To ask the expropriated Mavlas to work on the dam as labourers is like asking a man to dig a grave and bury his mother in it with his own hands. Perhaps, the Tatas are not aware that there are people in this world with whom sentiments weigh more than self. The Mavlas would rather see their hands torn out from their joints rather than use them in building up a dam which is sure to give a death-blow to their homesteads, their holy temples and all the happy associations which these places carry with them! It is but the most distorted economics that makes people leave the life of independence, simplicity, health and unsophisticated manners and adopt slavery, sophistication and all the other curses of the city life.

(11) The Railway at present under consideration can hardly be expected to benefit the public at large in the future. The history of Railways in this country tells its own tale.

(12) The Mavlas cannot bring themselves to believe that the Tata scheme will in any way benefit the country. How, then, can they reconcile themselves to the position of labourers on the dam?

(13) This argument exhibits a very curious species of Logic. It is alleged that 75 p. c. of the lands have been mortgaged with the creditors. But even if they are, how can it follow that none of these lands will, in-

future, be redeemed by the farmers from the hands of the creditors. Though mortgaged the lands are at present cultivated and used by the farmers almost as if they belonged to them entirely. This means that the mortgage has in no way been an impediment in the way of their earning their livelihood by the cultivation of the land. Not a single case has been recorded of a farmer having thought himself deprived of his ancestral business of tilling and reaping from the land simply because the latter happened to be mortgaged, or of a farmer having turned a labourer in a mill as a consequence of the mortgage. Let not the Tatas forget that in spite of the land being mortgaged the Mavlas and their savakars live together and have interdependent interests. Every year the farmer can legitimately take as much from the annual harvest as is required for the maintenance of his family, and it is only the rest that goes to the savakar. And besides the farmer has always the bright hope to warm his heart that he or his sons, or the sons of his sons will free his land from the bonds of mortgage. When, however, the Tata dam will cover these lands, they will be lost to the farmers never to be recovered! No mortgage laws on earth will then enable the farmers to redeem them! And is it not an important consideration that whatever the relations between the Mavlas and the savakars they are based on mutual free will. What right have the Tatas to poke their nose to interfere with those relations and make both the savakars and the creditors lose their annual income? Are the lands of the savakars "No man's lands" which may be used by rich capitalists in any way they choose?

The Mavalis' Point of View.

'A bold peasantry their country's pride
When once destroyed can never be supplied'

It has been demonstrated in the preceding chapter how very futile the whole scheme contemplated by the Tata Company is and that the various advantages likely to result from its materialisation are only elusive. The scheme is only calculated to profit the millowners in Bombay. For, the utilisation of electrical power for the running of mills will save 600,000 tons of coal and this means a saving of Rs. 1,25,00000 for the millowners. But the Mavalis do not think somehow or other that these benefits are to their advantage and hence their opposition and their Satyagraha. Shrewdly enough they see in this a plan to de-ruralise them and to make them a part of the urban proletariat with the inevitable serfdom under the heels of capitalism. And rightly have they pressed to part with their ancestral holdings for any amount of pecuniary compensation that the Tata Company may offer. This struggle is not a struggle between the Mavalis and the company-wallas but higher and greater issues are at stake. It is a struggle between industrialism locked up by the might and majesty of the Government on the one hand and the Mavalis representing peasant-proprietorship with its economic and equitable distribution of wealth on the other. This is a struggle between false economics and true one. No Government, howsoever powerful it may be, is justified in expropriating the people out of their lands which they hold dearer than life. By no stretch of imagination can this expropriation be sup-

ported on any moral grounds and so long as the Government have not been able to convince the people that the scheme is necessary in the interest of the general public, the Mavalis are fully justified before God and man in refusing to give up their lands made dearer with the association of thousand memories, and sanctified by the presence of numerous temples built by their fathers and forefathers. There cannot and ought not to be any justification to deprive even a single individual citizen of the State of his property unless the best interests of the State demand it. Indians do know that in times of national calamity, when the very life of the nation is in balance, the State is justified in demanding everything from the citizens, not excluding even their lives. But there is no such danger and hence the present attitude of the Government cannot be justified at all. Reason and logic are on the side of the Mavalis. The sabmerging of this vast tract of land which has been the cradle of Maratha liberty and which has played no mean part in the Maratha history is an act of vandalism, of tyranny, of injustice.—And all this to fatten the dividends of a private company!

The Government and the Tata company want to justify this scheme on the grounds of public utility. It will not be therefore out of place to consider this specious plea at some length. Nowhere in the Land Acquisition Act do we find any definition of public utility. If after some preliminary inquiry the Government think that the acquisition is 'likely to prove useful to the public,' the moment all the purposes for which aid of the Act is solicited become 'public purposes' In other words the whole thing is absurdly one-sided and there is nothing in the world which the Government allied with capitalism may not pronounce as falling under 'public purposes'. The persons whose lands are to be acquired

have no place in the so-called inquiry. The acquisition may entail the submerging of sacred places, of holy temples, honoured tombs, but all this is of no consideration and all that the unhappy victims can plead for, is some increase in the amount of compensation! The Government is to decide what is a public purpose and light-heartedly the Government decide what lands to be acquired. Legal ingenuity and forensic nobility are requisitioned so that the provisions of the law may be successfully abused. With the Government the law is not the embodiment of public will, but it is an engine of tyranny worked in the interest of the rich and the high. The provisions of this Act are significantly elastic and the Government can interpret them as they like. If one is to judge the spirit of the Act, in the light of the intentions of the framers, then no honest man can justify this applications of the L. A. A. to Mulsi Petha. At the time or when this act was passed the Hon. Mr. Bliss had given a distinct assurance that in no case it would be abused. He said that it was not the intention of the Government to use this Act for the benefit of any private company unless the purposes for which its application would be demanded were likely to benefit directly or indirectly the people that would be expropriated. But this assurance has been disregarded and the Government have now applied this Act for the benefit of a private company viz. the Tata Company. The house of Tatas and especially the late Mr. J.N. Tata are held in high esteem by the whole of India, for the great services they have been rendering to this country. India is proud of the achievements of the Tatas in the industrial field. But the present policy of the Tata Company, at least so far as the Mulsi project is concerned, is to aggrandise the individual interests of the Company. There was, time when the Tatas were looked upon as

the patrons of Indian commercial talent and industrial instinct. But in view of the recent disclosures it cannot be gainsaid that the Tatas look more for the dividends than the development of Indian ability in industrial concerns. The management in all the concerns run by the Tatas is predominantly European, and therefore the fears entertained by some Indians that one day or other the Tata concerns will stand on par with others started by English and other foreign capitalists only to exploit this unfortunate land. Sixty per cent of the share capital in the Tata Hydro-electric Company is owned by the directors and their friends. Very few shares are available for the general public and it would not be wrong if people believe that the concerns of the Tatas are only run to exploit this nation in the interest of the few. The Tatas may indulge in the tall talk of India's industrial revival but that is all unmitigated cant. India does not want modern industrialism to establish itself here with its attendant evils. Industrial greatness India does aspire for, but it is not prepared to make half its population as slaves of the capitalistic system. Industries must be run on national lines and no concern can be so called unless the general public is at liberty to subscribe to its capital. Few rich men combine and start a concern for the development of some industry in the nation; but this very fact will not make it national unless it is run on national lines and with national spirit. That national spirit is fast disappearing from most of the Tata concerns. India is trying to fight against the tyranny of autocracy in politics and will not tolerate the same in the financial world. These financial 'Bosses' try to be dictatorial in the money market and in the industrial field. The economic organisation of the world is thrown out of gear and Indian capital will see its way through this unrest if it only reads correctly

the signs of the times. The world must be made safe for democracy and industrial democracy is the ideal of the labour movement all the world over. The Tata Hydro-Electric Company is a tribute to the autocratic character of Indian capital. It is started, owned, controlled by a few, and the benefit that will accrue from this scheme will go to the pockets of the few. The nation is not likely to profit directly or indirectly. It is very well on the paper to say that 150000 H. P. will be available when this scheme is complete, but this amount of power is the property of the Tata Company and the Company may refuse to give it to those concerns which are truly national. Suppose tomorrow the Government inserts a condition with their contract with the said Company that it is not to supply electrical power to any but European Companies. The said Company in order not to forego its profits will surely accept it. European capital is very enterprising and it is not improbable that it will make the utmost of this. English capital in India is always able to secure the ear of the Government and nothing is impossible for it to obtain from this Government. Thus there is no security that the power that will be generated when this scheme is completed, will always be utilised for the betterment of Indian industries. Judging this scheme from whatever point of view it will be found that it is not in the best interest of the public that this scheme should receive the measure of public support and sympathy that its partisans demand.

While considering the justice and propriety of the application of the land Acquisition Act, the tract to which it is to be applied, its agricultural value, the genius of the people that inhabit—all these are factors which ought not to be made light of. Nearly 25,000 acres of the most fertile land will be submerged by this

project and nearly 10,000 people will have to leave their homesteads in search of employment. And all this is to be done with the help of an act passed by the Ma Bap Sircar, which is ever zealous of the interest of the masses ! Even the Industrial Commission has something to say against the Government. It has recommended that the Government should try to avoid the acquisition of peopled tract as far as possible in order to further industrial progress and that they should always respect private property. But this salutary recommendation of the Industrial Commission has been deliberately disregarded because it does not suit the Government now to adopt it. No person should be deprived of his private property by the Government in order to benefit any private company unless the purposes of the company are such that the persons who are thus deprived are likely to be benefitted therefrom. This very elementary principle has been very clearly enunciated by Pt. Malaya in his minute of dissent which he attached to the Report of the Industrial Commission. If the purposes for which land is required are not public purposes then the Government ought not to help the companies with the said act but should leave them to buy as ordinary people, and if they do, it will be a clear abuse of the said Act and the sooner it is wiped out from the statute book the better.

The opponents of the Mavlis urge that this acquisition is necessary in the interest of Indian industries and for the industrial advance of this land no sacrifice is too great. This plea is true to some extent. India wishes to develop her industries which were once her pride and to take her proper place in the front rank of the nations. But development of industries ought not to destroy agriculture the greatest industry of India and which supports 80 p.c. of her populace. India is pre-

eminently an agriculturist country and every one wishes to make it an industrial nation to some extent. India was able only 150 years back to manufacture all the articles from her own raw materials. But thanks to the bureaucratic solicitude of India's economic welfare she has been reduced to the position of a supplier of raw material to the world market in general and the English-market in particular. The economic dominance is more complete than the political and it has resulted in the destruction of all the cottage industries and the gradual ruralisation of the nation. But now India is awake and is determined to throw off this economic thralldom and truly no sacrifice is too great for this. But it will be a sad misfortune if India were to copy the methods and means of the West and bring industrialism with industrial greatness. We do not wish that Indian industries should be run on European lines. India wants to avoid labour unrest, strikes, lockouts and all those invariable concomittants of Industrialism. Trusts, cortes, combinations, are to be avoided. On the one hand India wants to avoid socialisation of industries, but on the other it wants to establish industries on national lines. European industrialism has destroyed villages and has divided the community into two parts, the capitalists and the proletarians. It has made the rich, richer and the poor, poorer. It has reduced the man to the level of an automaton. He is only a 'factor' of the production, only a machine at that. The cheer and the moral elevation of the middle ages are gone. Misery and struggle are all that surround and store the European countries. The power of capital is supreme and it dominates politics, national and international and is the direct cause of the wars of Europe. India herself was the home of contention between the Dutch, the English and the French during the

17th and the 18th century. They fought with each other for the commercial monopoly of India. In the end England became successful and since then India is steadily being exploited for the benefit of England. This point has its relevancy to India because with the advent of English rule, commercialised civilisation of the West has begun to absorb India. Even the last Great War has failed to solve the labour problem and the forces that have been enchained by the war have thrown the whole economic organisation of Europe out of gear. Is it not then prudent to avoid industrialism in India just now when it is only beginning to show its head. The history of industrial unrest in England, during the course of the last two years is enough to convince every honest man that it is imprudent and impolitic to purchase industrial greatness at the risk of national existence. England is almost on the brink of a civil war and even if it does not take place, such a prospect of the nation always divided into two hostile camps, is not a happy one to contemplate. This is the evil of industrialism, its legitimate child. Sane people in England are saying that it is a time more to cry halt and are trying to find out some solution out of this impasse. People in England are demanding nationalisation of industries and the same is true mutatis mutandis of all the European countries. Russia has gone a step further and has made all productive concerns national. This dictatorship of the protectorial is looked upon with eagerness by the people all the world over and on its success or failure depends the fate of labour movement in the world. Industrial unrest is abroad and men are seriously doubting whether this industrial progress is after all in the best interests of the nations. This struggle between the capital and the labour seems to be apparently insoluble. As stated

above the Russian people are trying to solve it and it may be safely said that they have achieved a fair measure of success.

Few decades ago there was no such problem as now confronts Europe in India. India has been reduced to an agricultural country pure and simple, East India Company having destroyed all the industries in India. Industrial revival in India is a matter of recent growth. Indian industries are showing signs of life, but unfortunately they are all run after European system and have European ideals before them. If our captains of industries are alive to the problems that face Europe to-day they will try to avoid many a blunder. But there is little to hope in this direction. Already the populace in towns is fast increasing and modern industrialism is fast establishing itself in this land. Industrial strikes are the order of the day. The two-fold division of the community viz. the capitalists and the labourers is manifest. We are almost treading in the footsteps of Europe and every step that Europe has taken towards industrial greatness has been followed by bloodshed, by misery, by unrest. No, India does not want that half of its populace should always live on the brink of starvation, while the other half rolling in the ill-gotten wealth. Now we do not want to destroy our agricultural civilisation which has secured peace and contentment to the major portion of the populace and establish in its place commercialised civilisation under the sickening shadow of which only 'bosses' and beggars alone are to be found. Should India then go head-long towards this and should India ask the Mavalis to give up their lands only to establish this unjust, inequitable system of capitalism.

Here some may say we have no objection to your learning from the experience of the European countries.

But do you not at least approve of the nationalisation of industries which has been discovered by Europe as a very efficacious means of the improvement of a country? This reason may appear to be quite logical and irrefutable, but the Mavalas have an answer ready with them. In the first place they say it has not yet been proved that nationalisation of industries necessarily amicably settles all disputes and that it necessarily leads to the direct advancement of every individual. Nationalisation of industries is to-day but an experiment whose results can not definitely be understood or foreseen. Why then hastily introduce that experiment in our country? Besides even granting that the experiment yields very good results, it does not necessarily follow that India also will profit by it. We can never afford to neglect it. There is great difference between the conditions that obtain in India and of those of other countries like England, France, Germany and Russia. The latter are all of them free nations, and naturally every individual there, can plausibly think himself entitled to a proportionate share of what may be called the nation's property. Things are widely different in India. The country is governed by an alien Government. We have no share or voice in determining the way in which our products and manufactures may be handled. It is therefore evidently improper to indulge in a misnomer to talk of nationalisation of industries in our country. We may even say that nationalisation of Indian industries will be as good as entrusting a dare devil robber with the keys of one's valued treasure. When once the British Government are allowed to enjoy a direct mastery over our industries and factories it will soon be impossible for us to stay their hand, even if it be found out that the British Government is benefiting none but the British merchants. Those who

speak of the nationalisation of industries in India do not perhaps understand their own words. The country that is wallowing in dependence and struggling to be free must guard with all vigilance against indigenous capital being controlled by the foreign Government or by any other foreign interests. When a country allows the interests of foreign merchants to obtain stable ground it only allows so many impediments to be created in its way of liberty. Egypt has tested this very bitter cup of poison and the world knows too well that it is chiefly the foreign capital that is standing between Egypt and its freedom. It is a policy with European nations to introduce the thin end of the wedge in a foreign nation by pouring capital and making it take deep roots there. Their object is by that means to secure the permanence of their power. History records numerous cases in which the Europeans have got into a foreign nation under the plea of defending some rights of their own and then spread over its whole extent like a veritable tubercle. These considerations make it clear that till the day of India's Swaraj there is no good of floating big factories here or making them national. Let this not be forgotten by those who ask the Mavalas to be satisfied with the hope that the Tata Company will be a national concern.

The ears of the public have been dinned with the noise of the real and imaginary advantages that are expected from the scheme of the Tatas, and people have been misled in more ways than one to think as if there was not a single blemish in the scheme of the Tatas. As a matter of fact, however, even if we grant that all the advantages claimed are real, they are all till now merely on paper. Who would vouch that actual experience will not totally falsify all expectations! On the contrary the advantages accruing

from the continuance of the Mulshi peta in its present state are things of reality. People have been enjoying them for hundreds of years and will enjoy them for all the future years. Mulshi Peta is the most fertile and sanitary area in the Poona district. Every year this Peta yields more than 25000 thousand Khandis of rice and the whole district gets from this Peta the major portion of its rice supply. The rice again is first rate in kind. The moment the lands of the Mulshi Peta are lost under water, the Poona district will have to feed itself on the Rangoon Rice, a variety of rice well known for its wretched quality. The sanitation of ten lakhs of people is of a far greater importance even from the view point of the whole nation, than the alleged saving of two and half percent of the yearly supply of coal. That percentage of coal can undoubtedly be saved in other ways. But is it possible to get a produce of 25000 khandis of rice when the Mulshi lands are submerged? The world has not as yet heard of any western invention which would do it. Again the dam would spoil the sanitation of miles of district round about it and who would not say that it is in the interest of the general public to cancel a scheme that is calculated to affect the health of hundreds of villages. The district of Mulshi constitutes the tops of Sahyadri Hills and produces every year larger quantities of Hirda, Shikekai Jamba, Amba, and Honey, things which are daily required by Indian families. Similarly it is through this district that an important route runs down to the Konkan which has been used for traffic for hundreds of years. This route will be closed to the public when the Tata Dam rears its head. The Tatas speak of compensation but there are hundred and one considerations like the above which neither have received any attention from the Tatas nor are capable of any compensation.

Another serious consideration is that in the Mulshi Peta are located two sacred temples of God Shiva. They are incalculably ancient and the people of Mulshi Peta have unshaken faith in their sanctity. Their religious sentiments will receive a very great shock if these temples are sub-merged; and British Government knows but too well how religious sentiments of Indians can not be tampered with without serious and frightful consequences.

When a whole people that have lived in a particular place for centuries together, are to be removed from there the evils of that phenomenon can not be calculated by mere dead statistics of acres of land and the number of houses. The innumerable ties of love, sentiment and body that arise out of a lifelong settlement in one place defy all mathematical measurements and it is only folly and hard-heartedness to profess to compensate for them. The Tatas may, if they choose or if they are compelled, offer compensation for lands but how will they compensate for the rights of Inam, Aluta and Baluta? An inamdar in a place can not be said to be sufficiently paid for all his rights when he gets only the price of his lands, for the mere silver does not enable him to go out elsewhere and become an Inamdar again. So it is with the Patil of a village. The honour of an Inamdar or a Patil may, to Government or to the Tatas seem hollow but still it is there. Our only point is that there are numerable small and great things for which compensation is neither practical nor possible.

We will like to suggest one more thing in this connection. Instead of driving out the Mulshi population, let the Government think of encouraging people from Nagar, Sholapur and similar famine-stricken districts to migrate to Mulshi. Famine is almost every year visit-

ing Nagar, Sholapur etc. while the district of Mulshi hardly suffers from shortage of harvest. A survey of the Mulshi District will convince Government that it can accommodate and feed almost the double of its present population.

It is really a matter of surprise that the idea of settling the people from the famine-stricken area in this most fertile tract of land has never been occurred to be so called "Ma Bap" Sarcar.

It is but quite natural and just that the Mavlas are in no way willing to be driven out of their lands in the absence of the proof of real industrial progress and national prosperity. The consideration of money only does not constitute the main purpose of life: but there looms predominantly the sentiment i. e. attachment to their home lands.

The history of human progress amply gives evidence to the universal truth that the mother land transcends all other precious things in the world. This has so often been proved from time to time in all ages and nations.

The valuation of these two things cannot be made in terms of money.

The legal aspect of the Mulshi Peta Acquisition.

The preamble of the Land Acquisition Act (I of 1894) provides for the acquisition of land for companies. Section 4 of the Act lays down that wherever it appears to the Local Government that land in any locality is likely to be needed for any public purpose, a notification

to that effect shall be published in the Official Gazette and at convenient places in the said locality, and thereupon it shall be lawful for any officer, appointed for the purpose, and for his servants and workmen to hold preliminary investigation. Chapter VII of the Act deals with the acquisition of land for companies. S. 40 makes it incumbent upon the Local Government to hold an enquiry to ascertain whether such acquisition is needed for the construction of some work, and whether such work is likely to prove useful to the public. It should be noted that the Act does not define the expression "public purpose." Similarly, the previous enquiry mentioned in S. 40 of the Act is left to the sweet will of the officer specially appointed by the Local Government. The only persons concerned in this enquiry are the Government on one side, which has to be satisfied, and the company, which has to furnish materials for the purpose of satisfying the Local Government. Section 41 of the Act deals with agreement to be entered into between the company and the Secretary of State in Council, and recites the five matters in regard to which provision should be made in the said agreement to the satisfaction of the Local Government, and one of these matters is the terms on which the public shall be entitled to use the work. The Hon'ble Mr. Bliss in introducing the Bill said:—

"It is not intended that the Act shall be used for the acquisition of land for any company in which the public has merely an indirect interest and of works carried out by which the public can make no direct use. The Act cannot, therefore, be put in motion for the benefit of such a company as a spinning or weaving company, or as an Iron Foundry, for, although the works of such companies are distinctly "likely to be useful to the public", it is not

possible to predicate of them "the terms on which the public shall be entitled to use" them, a condition precedent to the acquisition of land as laid down in S. 41. It is important that the public should understand that the Act will not be used in furtherance of private speculations."

Applying the aforesaid tests to the acquisition of land in Mulshi Peta for the Tata Power Company, Limited, one cannot but say that the acquisition of the same is illegal under even the existing law itself. The electric energy to be generated at the Power House is neither a public purpose, nor such work as is likely to prove useful to the public. At the outset it will benefit a particular class of the public at large, namely, the class of mill-owners. The agreement as contemplated by S. 41 between the Tata Power Company, Limited, on the one part, and the Secretary of State for India in Council on the other part is published in Part I of the Bombay Government Gazette of May 26th, 1921. A perusal of the said agreement leaves the impression on one's mind that it has not complied with all the terms enumerated in S. 41 of the Act. One of the five matters to be provided for is, "The terms on which the public shall be entitled to use the work." But paragraph 19 of the above-mentioned agreement only provides for the supply of the electrical energy to and use of the same by "any local authorities and any Mill, Railway, Tramway and other Companies", and not by the "public" at large. The agreement thus contravenes the provisions of S. 41, and cannot be said to be binding on the persons concerned. The agreement, thus, not only runs counter to the letter of the law, but it also strongly militates against the spirit thereof, as disclosed in the extract given above from the speech of the Hon'ble Mr. Bliss, the mover of the Bill. The Act was not intended to be put into opera-

tion for the purpose of acquiring wholesale a number of villages, much less in the manner in which the villages in Mulshi Peta are determined to be acquired by the Bombay Government for such an entirely private Company as the Tata Power Company. No wonder, therefore, if The Mavalas of Mulshi Peta should have boldly resorted to the great Satyagraha movement, and should have resolved to bring both the Bombay Government and Tata Power Company to their senses.

The attitude of Government.

The attitude of the government in connection with this episode, has been, from the outset of the operations, entirely consistent with their usual policy of expressing profuse lip sympathy with the assertion of their favourite Mabap theory followed by a genuinely callous disregard for the welfare of the masses. From the very beginning of the struggle of the Mavalas against the Tatas the government have very kindly undertaken to back the company! The Mavalas have never received anything but slap on the face whenever they approached with piteous faith, to their Mabap Sarkar, for the redress of the grievances. Even an enemy of the Mavalas cannot accuse them of indecent haste in coming to the resolution of resorting to Satyagraha. Before taking up this last weapon they had exhausted all the means of moving the government to the duty of protecting their interests.

As soon as rumours about the project reached the Mulshi people they applied to the Collector and Com-

misioner for help against the intentions of the company. Poor Mavalas! little did they know or dream that the government had already allied themselves with the Tatas. The officials disclaimed any knowledge of the scheme and the people slumbered in a false sense of security. But eventually the government turning their coat began to exclaim "well! this is no new-fangled scheme; the project is twenty years' old"! Now even accepting this for the sake of argument that the knowledge of this twenty years old project was confined only to the higher officials in the Secretariat, we cannot but ask was it not the duty of these Collectors and Commissioners to inquire at least when their attention had been drawn to the reports. For what then, if not at least for this, are they fed with such fat salaries from the public revenue? But now the rude disillusionment came to the people of Mulshi. In 1919 June they were served with notices under Sec.4 of the L.A.A. and the people of course refused to surrender their lands. But once again the awakening sense of the people was laid to rest by the Collector by the expressions of his sympathy and assurances of his support, and thus the little stir died away in indifference and inactivity on the part of the people till it became a settled fact. The people had by this time gathered at Sbirotha and Walwan some bitter experience of the effects these damming schemes brought in their train. They were therefore convinced that utter ruin stared them in the face unless they made haste to do something in the matter. On the 26th and 27th of December 1919 meetings were convened at Awalas and Mulshi to devise effective methods of staying the onslaught. All male adults of the Mulshi Peta were present at these meetings and it was unanimously resolved there to oppose the project by all constitutional and legal means. A small executive committee

was appointed with Messrs. Gupte and Gadre as Secretaries. A delegation of the committee then interviewed the Collector at Khed and presented their case. The Collector prefacing his remarks with the repetition of the hollow sentiments of sympathy terminated the interview by the declaration of his inability to do anything in the matter. This is the beginning of the revelation of the true policy of the Government. H. E. the Governor declined to meet the deputation and directed them to his Chief Secretary. This may be due to shortness of time at his disposal or perhaps he thought the subject was not important enough to deserve his personal attention! All the while the company was not inactive. They commenced the digging of foundation and other allied operations. Strong in their insolence of power they did not care even to go through the preliminaries necessary according to the law; strong in the strength of the Government at their back they pushed on with the conviction that they were immune from the effects of any illegal act they may choose to commit. The people naturally objected to this illegal encroachment by the company and if the Government were impartial they would have certainly espoused the just cause of the poor masses; but the Government did nothing of the sort. The perfectly legitimate demand by the people for the production of the certificate of permission was met by the European servants of the company with impudent threats of criminal prosecutions. One can easily realize what frightful effect such kind of intimidation must have been produced on the imagination of the ignorant villagers who, it is wellknown, often are possessed by the idea that any white-skinned person—be he a beggar in the street—is their Sirkar. For all these unlawful transactions, protests were wired to the Governor and the Viceroy and the

Secretaries of the Association mentioned above called upon the Collector and communicated him the state of affairs. The only answer was a pious assurance of enquiry after the beaureaucratic fashion. One would naturally think that the Collector would institute the promised inquiry and meet out justice to the poor Mavlis. The inquiry instituted was a mere farce. It was an inquiry between the Collector and Mr. Cameron and there was no place therein for the poor Mavalis. The collector believed that Mr. Cameron was a modern Solomon and would give the Mavalis nothing but justice. It was a travesty of justice. The people complained against the unauthorised and unlawful acts of the servants of the Tata company and the innocent Collector with an air of impartiality referred the whole thing to Mr. Cameron, the servant of the Tata Company. No more unjust and saddening procedure can be imagined. Mr. Cameron informed the Collector that all was quiet and he had ascertained this from his own officers who gave him to understand that Mulshi was as quiet as possible. But in that very letter he insinuated that the trouble came from the agitators who were not local people. And that was enough for the Collector and he immediately pronounced the whole affair to be an exaggerated one in his letter of the 23rd February 1920 and all this piramid of conclusion on the slender apex of a single letter and that too of a party concerned. In his reply to this letter the Secretary of the Mandal very clearly pointed out that the whole agitation was an indogenous one and the statement of Mr. Cameron was absolutely and compeletely false. He also pointed out that the agitation was not engineered by the Poona politicians but it was started and conducted by the Mavla people themselves. Late in the day the Poona people entered the field not

as soldiers but as helpers with the spirit of the Red Cross, moved deeply as it were by dangers that beset the Mavalis. The Poona people did not as much as suggest them the idea of Satyagraha. Last November when Mahatma Gandhiji came down to Poona, prominent people from Mulshi waited upon him and solicited his advice and guidance. Mahatmaji with his characteristic frankness told them that if they ever depended upon the Government they would get nothing and urged them to stand on their own legs and to die in the dam for their motherland. Subsequently another meeting was held in which the Poona people took some part for the first time. There in that meeting the idea of Satyagraha was first mooted out, but to conclude from this that the Poona people were at the bottom is to indent a heavy draft on one's reason and commonsense. Even assuming for arguments' sake that the Poona people were there, was it criminal on their part to take up the cause of the poor and of the helpless? A just cause does not become a whit less, even if it is expressed by the vilest politician. After all the Mavalas owe the kith and kin of the Poona people who think it their sacred duty to help the Mavalis. The time to play one class against the other has gone and the sooner the Government recognizes this the better. As against the unjust Government we stand absolutely united and shall not allow the Government any longer to exploit masses. The masses are awakening to their rights and they are perceiving slowly but surely that they cannot get their grievances remedied under the present system of Government.

In pursuance of the Governor's letter the representatives of the Mulshi people waited upon Mr. Mead, the Chief Secretary. This interview was no better and the only assurance given was that compensation

would be liberally given and the Chief Secretary took care to point out that it was rather impossible to find out lands for all the expropriated ryots. The Chief Secretary took the representatives to task for what they had written about the Andra people. He promised the Inamdar of Shedani all possible help. His promises the people value no greater than others given by his colleagues. His letter of the 12th March 1920 to the Secretary of the Mandal showed to the whole world the net result of the interview. The Government was determined to acquire the lands and the Mandal was shamefully called to help the Government in this act if it really represented the true interests of the Mavalis. Only a fortnight after this Hon. Mr. Paranjpye brought a resolution to the effect that the expropriated ryots should be given shares of the Tata Company. The Chief Secretary had promised in his interview that Government would consider the proposal of giving shares to the expropriated ryots. Naturally, after this one would expect the Government to accept this resolution. But the Government were too honest to do it. They opposed the resolution and declared that lands would be provided as far as possible for the ryots. Only a month after this the Collector of Poona announced that 33 acres of land was available! The land that will be submerged is only 10,000 acres! This much for the provision of land. The people now await the liberal compensation!!

While these things were going on, the Tata Company was pushing the preliminary works with ominous speed. Sheds were erected, lines were laid down and the digging operations were well nigh in progress. All these works were started even before the agreement between the Company and the Government was duly executed. But the Company never doubted that the

Government would go against it and so it invested 70 lacs of rupees. The Company took lands on which the actual operations were carried on on lease. When the people saw that the Company was abusing their rights, they demanded back their lands. But the Government was indifferent. The Government were allied with the Company and Mr. Curtis defended these dishonest doings of the Company on principles of urgency.

No honest man can justify the Company or the Government. It was a move on the part of the Government and the Company. The Government wanted to throw the *fait accomplis* in the face of the people. The Company now comes round and says that it has spent so much and now it is unjust to ask it to drop the scheme. These tactics would even make the tyrants blush.

When memorials, deputations and all other time-honoured methods failed, the Mavalis thought of Satyagraha. They prepared themselves for the struggle. The Government knew all this and yet the Government did not accept the resolution of Mr. Gupte which he moved in March Sessions of the Council in which he urged the postponement of the work. If justice and honesty were on the side of the Government, they would have accepted this very mild resolution. But public has been of no account with the Government. And so as the last constitutional weapon of a down-pressed nation, the Mulsi people determined upon Satyagraha and by courageously using it even under the greatest provocation had obliged the Company to stop the work till November 1921. Satyagraha has done what other measures could not do. Their disciplined action has attracted the

admiration of the whole of India. Now at least the Government ought to know what the Mulsi people think about the scheme. Maharashtra has endorsed the actions of the Mulsi people and is unanimously for the abandonment of the scheme. On the other hand the Government are determined to complete this project. The Government have completed and have executed the contract with the company without consulting the people. There cannot be any truce now. And November will see the Mavalis again in the ditch as Satyagrahis with the iron-determination ranged against modern capitalism backed up by the might of an unjust system of Government.

Satyagraha.

When it grew impossible to get redress from the Company and the Government. The Mavalas decided to have recourse to Satyagraha as the last recourse of the helpless but the righteous. They were convinced that only Almighty God would now respond their prayer and they had faith that "God helps those who help themselves." Hence they determined to defend their ancestral lands, their families, and their homesteads. With the strength of Unity behind them, relying upon none but their own soul-force, they immediately began preparations for the Satyagraha campaign and when they felt to be sufficiently prepared to face the forces of the capitalist company and Government, they served the following notice of Satyagraha to the Collector of Poona.

To,

The Collector of Poona

Sir,—We, the undersigned, the residents in Mulshi Peta and their sympathisers respectfully inform you that the Tata Company with the consent of the Government has started work of the dam which, we believe, will result in destroying the lands and houses of the people of Mulshi in the interest of the capitalists of Bombay. We cannot consent to it. If therefore Government would not order the stopping of the work of construction of the dam before 15th of April, we have resolved to resort to Satyagraha on the 16th of April in order to defend our rights. We have been compelled to do this as there is no other alternative and we are doing it of our own free will. We shall of course do it most peacefully. We shall not do any violence in the least on any account. We have taken oaths not to raise a finger against anybody and suffer peacefully even if others trouble us. We have given this notice to you as we thought it right to do so. Therefore we ask you to send if you like your officials to bear witness to our behaving according to our own will and to stop any violence on the part of others.

A similar notice with a few necessary alterations was sent to the manager of the Tata Company. Both the notices were signed by twenty gentlemen and it is important for those who raised the cry that the Mulshi Satyagraha was a movement got up by the Poona agitators for their own interests, to remember that only two gentlemen of Poona had put their signatures on the notices. It is too evident that in the peculiarly courageous battle of Satyagraha it is never fruitful to force a warrior on the back of a horse and even if such forced gunners do show some

promise at the start they can never show that moral courage, discipline, patience, and perservance which were manifested by the Mavalas throughout the struggle. The notices could not dissuade the Tatas or the Government from their path of unrighteous tyranny; and so the Mavalas, as they had already declared began their battle on the 16th of April under the banner of their Shivaji the Great, with the rising sun as their sacred witness. On the previous night all the Satyagrahi Mavalas assembled together and their leaders fully impressed upon them the sacredness, the importance and the justice of the cause for which they were fighting, making it clear to them with the greatest emphasis how non-violence was their sense of Satyagraha as well as the key to success. Again and again the leaders reminded the Mavalas of their vow and again and again the united answer of a thousand warrior-like Mavalas came that they were determined to fight out the battle of Satyagraha for their Motherlands. A specious mandap decorated with creepers and foliage had been erected on the river-bank, where the kitchen, the store-house, the Satyagraha office were located and where the Mavalas and their leaders used to sleep and pass their leisure. In order to secure division of labour the whole business had been divided into various departments each of which being managed by a head volunteer with the necessary number of volunteers under him. Also things were so arranged that all the departments could be, whenever necessity arose, controlled and guided by one man. There were three batches or battalions, if we may use the word, of the Satyagrahi Mavalas and each of them had a Naik with three sub naiks under him. Each man in each batch was to implicitly obey his Naik and there was again the Head Naik who supervised all the three batches and whose

word was law with all of them. Thus the Satyagraha Camp naturally assumed the aspect of a military camp and a sort of military discipline from the beginning right up to the end, without a single exception. It must be said that it was this admirable discipline which could account for the fact that during the fifteen days of struggle there was not a single act on the part of the Mavalas which carried with it even the faintest suggestion of violence, though the Mavalas had to fight against odds. During the whole period of a fortnight one could feel as if one was in the presence of the Deities of Truth, Peace, Devotion, Happiness, and Unity. The Mulshi Satyagraha has clearly demonstrated how men of different ages, opposite views, and varying thoughts can lead a cause to a successful end provided they are united and inspired by the same ideal. Oh! would that all Indians would learn the proper lesson from this Satyagraha Struggle of Mulshi! Who would then stand between them and their freedom!

It is not an unusual experience that a person who has money as well as power on his side cares but a little to analyse the utterances and the doings of the other party. The same happened here. It is not surprising that the Tatas and the Government who were under the delusion that they would easily bring round the Mavalas with money, and failing that with power, could not understand the phenomenon of a few people from Poona stirring up the illiterate Mavalas and making them in every way prepared to face death unmoved. It was not, however, possible for them to ignore the talk of Satyagraha as mere "tall talk" after they received the above mentioned notices from the Satyagrahis; and on 16th descended on the scene the representatives of the Tatas, from the Chief Engineer to the lowest officer like a Mukadam, and the representative of Government, the

Superintendent of Police, and his suad. They could not, however, till the last moment believe that Satyagraha was really seriously intended, but when at the appointed hour a thousand Mavalas and their friends arrived at the place and placed their bodies under the crowbars and the hammers of the workmen, the representatives of the Tatas and Government were awakened to a sense of the real situation there. Immediately the company officers planned an attack on the Satyagrahis under the eye of the Government officials with the aid of their army of labourers. The engineers of the company ran up to different places and began exorting the labourers, in words gentle or wild, to continue work. The Satyagrahi Mavalas on the other hand stick to their guns like anything and they swerved not even an inch from their appointed places. Every moment that the mason proceeded to lay mortar and stone on the wall of the dam his eyes met with the brave body lying upon the stones. The workmen who intended to work with his crowbar found the suppliant figure of his countryman stretched on his feet as a crowbar descended down. The labourer who had to hammer stones into pieces realised that his hammer would break down the bones of his kinsman rather than a stone and in no time he threw away the hammer and stood aloof. The struggle continued only for two hours, but those two hours were full of the highest sentiments and the gravest importance. On the one hand were the Mavalas under their beloved leaders, and on the other were the labourers under their masters. It was a fight between those who worked for their bread like hirelings and those who wielded their swords for the honour and prestige of their country. At last it was proved that "wherever there is Truth there is God" and "wherever there is God there is Victory." The labourers and the officials of the Company tried their

utmost to continue the work but ultimately they grew helpless in the face of the Satyagraha of the Mavalas and had to give up. This was the first and the last important skirmish between the two parties during the Satyagraha fight. After that the Company never made any serious attempt to resume work and whenever an indifferent attempt was made it was immediately faced by the peaceful Mavalas. On the first day at noon the Company asked the Satyagrahis to permit the watering of the wall, as it was all covered with their bodies. But the permission was not granted; and so between four and five in the afternoon Mr. Bhaba of the Tata Company conceived and immediately proceeded to execute a plan of taking up water through pipes and throwing it down on the Mavalas from a height of fifty feet. The Mavalas drew the attention of the Government officials and the Tata people to the fact that the water that was being thrown down was almost boiling but deaf ears were turned to their protest. For half an hour there was continuous shower of hot water on the prostrate Mavalas and their leaders. But not a man moved and the hot water plan failed. From that moment onwards till the truce the Mavalas were throughout a successful party and the Company were the defeated one. The next morning when Mr. N. C. Kelkar arrived on the scene Mr. Bhaba requested that at least he should be allowed to make the Company's position clear. The Satyagrahis deliberated upon this request of Mr. Bhaba and ultimately the Company offered to stop work absolutely till Tuesday the 19th evening; and it was agreed to hold an informal round table meeting at the Gaikwad wada on Monday the 18th morning. The meeting came off at the appointed time and place where Messrs. Bhaba and Cameron represented the Tatas. The leaders of the Mavalas clearly showed how, in the matter of

the Mulshi dam the Company had been guilty of gross injustices from the beginning. Mr. Bhaba on the other hand tried to justify the Company's action. The meeting lasted for an hour or more, but nothing came out of it, and both the parties began further preparations.

The Satyagrahi Mavalas were inspired by the faith that their was the cause of truth and that nothing would consequently be amissed with them and the course of events proved how they were right in their faith. Before the regular beginning of Satyagraha those who led the struggle were naturally anxious and uncertain as regards help from outside and they had left Poona for Mulshi with nothing to rely on but God's grace. But soon after the establishment of the Satyagraha camp at Mulshi, "the Satyagraha Sahayak Committee" was formed at Poona with Dr. Phatak as the Secretary. This Committee vigorously began the work of awakening public sympathy for the Mavalas. As a consequence every sort of help began to pour in from Poona to Mulshi and the flow of money, men and material never slacked till the end. Dr. Phatak received on the 20th a letter from the Collector which informed him on behalf of Government that it was impossible to stop the work of the dam. The Collector also proceeded to state his individual readiness to find out, as far as possible, substitute lands for the Mavalas or failing that to give them liberal compensation. Meanwhile the Satyagraha at the dam had been resumed from the 20th morning. On the 21st morning a meeting of the Satyagrahis was held in the Mandap where the letter from the Collector was read out to them and they were asked to deliberate for an hour and decide what their reply to the letter should be. After an hour the meeting again began its session and in the presence of Government officials the Mavalas were asked to state their decision. The thousand Mavalas, with a unani-

mous voice cried that they were absolutely unwilling to accept any compensation in money or kind. This decision of the Mavalas was duly communicated to the Collector and Satyagraha continued. The news of the succession of the work of the dam spread like wild fire in the whole of the Mulshi Peta and surrounding district and from far and near people flocked, curious to have a look at the much-heard-of Satyagraha. Even women came in scores and the result of all this was that the numerical strength of the Satyagrahis considerably increased and on one morning the Satyagrahi women numbered five hundred.

Every day the Satyagrahis used to be up at five in the early morning. As an intimation to get up, sweet Abhangas used to be sung at that hour. After getting up all did their morning duties and some had their bath. Then the Mavalas were arranged in different groups and an humble breakfast was put in the hands of each man. It consisted of churmuras, ground-nuts, date fruits and pieces of gur. Sacks after sacks of these materials were required every day. The Mavalas then used to March up to the dam and occupy their appointed places. They used to breakfast in their places. At about midday the wives of almost all the Mavalas brought lunch. The women used to come from very distant places for that purpose. During the time when the labourers got a recess the Mavalas used to gather in groups and eat their bread. Again when the labourers returned to work the Mavalas resumed their places. At about 5-30 in the evening the Mavalas used to return to the camp where a simple dinner consisting of rice and broth prepared by alternate batches of Satyagrahis awaited them. After dinner the Mavalas chatted amongst themselves and read and discussed the paragraphs about the struggle in different papers. Similarly they sent some from amongst them

to their villages for urgent business if there was any, with the express order to return by next morning. At night Mr. Kanitkar of Chinchwad Swavalamban Rashtriya Pathshala and his students used to sing some Bhajans and Powadas and provided amusement as well as encouragement to the Satyagrahis. Thrice blessed were they who had the good fortune to witness those inspiring scenes in the moonlit nights. The leaders used to meet together every night and discuss and fix the next day's programme. As far as possible unanimous decisions were arrived at but even when opinions differed actions were always united.

In this way the Satyagraha struggle lasted for a fortnight. Every time that the labourers tried to resume work the Satyagrahis offered passive and peaceful resistance. At last when the representative of the Bombay Chronicle saw Mr. Cameron, the Chief Engineer of the Tatas the latter expressed his desire for an interview with leaders of the Mavalas. The interview was granted and after some discussion a truce was agreed to, till November 1921 on the following conditions:—

(a) no work of any kind will be resumed in connection with the construction of the dam and the quarry works except the pouring of the upstream face of the wall and the carrying of stones on the western side of the dam.

(b) that no work of any kind will be resumed in connection with the bridge and causeway on the eastern side of the dam.

The above undertaking is to hold good from this day the 28th of April, 1921 to the 7th of November 1921.

(Sd.) ALEXANDER CAMERON,
M. C. J. E.

The above conditions were accepted by both parties and Satyagraha was suspended. Naturally the Satyagraha Camp was dissolved, a big meeting was held in which fervent prayers were offered to God for the Victory achieved and vows were taken to return to the Satyagraha camp, if needed in November with redoubled faith and determination. After the meeting all the Satyagrahis dispersed and returned to their beloved homes.

Future.

The agreement, made between the Tatas and the Mavalas is a binding upon the Company to suspend work till the 7th of November. The Mavalas are fully conscious of the fact that the temporary yielding by the company is merely a pretext to get sufficient time to crush the people forever, and that the success, won by them is also temporary. The company has yielded to the illiterate Mavalas lest its prestige be jeopardised owing to the non-fulfilment of the conditions, required even by the unjust Land Acquisition Act and the pretext of the national garb may come to light. The Mavalas are not elated with the temporary success and that shall never occur to them, otherwise Shri Shivaji could not have been able to establish the Hind Swaraj with the help of their ancestors against odds and trying circumstances. Just as the company is engaged in preliminary preparations, the Mavalas have also determined to enlist the sympathy of the public by showing that their cause rests upon the rock of truth, justice

and equity. The Mavlas convinced the delegates of the Maharashtra Provincial Conference, held at Bassein, of the justness of the cause and the Conference has passed the resolution favourable to them. The propaganda of holding meetings and putting forth the pros and cons of the subject before the public has already begun in all the districts of Maharashtra. The Mavlas strongly hope that the question may not be restricted to the confines of Maharashtra only but will be taken up by the leaders of other provinces in order to create a sympathetic and congenial atmosphere to this movement.

After this temporary truce the Government of Bombay has communicated to the Mavlas that the construction of the dam-work is *inevitable*. The company has completed the agreement and has begun to acquire lands according to the Land Acquisition Act. Thus the company in conjunction with the Government is ready for the tussle in November next.

In spite of the huge preparations both by the company and the Government, the Mavlas are in no way shaken from their determination to get the project cancelled; but they are even ready to sacrifice their lives to save their motherland from being submerged under water. In spite of the grim determination of the Mavlas and the force of public opinion, if the Government does not cancel the project, the Mavlas will once more, begin their Satyagraha. At last the Mavlas strongly hope that their countrymen will run to their rescue and extend their sympathy in deeds.
